

Analysis of photograph NLI Ref: L_ROY_03083 of Ship Street Barracks, Dublin aiming to identify the regiment of the sentry in the foreground. Posted on the Great War Forum, the in-depth analysis was undertaken by forum member **Frogsmile** with additional information by **Heritage Plus**. The analysis contains useful general information pertaining to the 19th Century British Army, and may assist in identifying Victorian British Army uniforms from photographs. It also contains several sources of information about British Army regiments in Dublin in the late 1800s. The dashed lines separate the various posts.

Depaor01:

The National Library of Ireland posted a pic (zoomed below) of Ship Street barracks in 1900 which I always assumed was populated by RIC at the time. Popular opinion says otherwise and I was wondering if anyone could make a stab at identifying at least the uniform.



Heritage Plus:

The National Library of Ireland date this photograph as c1900.

<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/ship-street-barracks-in-dublin-lawrence-photographic-studio/xwG31Wb6Xm1j6w?hl=en>

The 1901 Census has Royal Irish Fusiliers in residence.

Dave

Frogsmile:

He's a line infantryman wearing guard order with blue home service helmet. As it's not a regimental HQ and depot, but one of the regionally distributed barracks, he could be from any of the English, Welsh, or Irish regiments, except that at first glance his dark hued collar and cuffs ('facings') indicate either, a Royal regiment with dark blue facings, or the Connaught Rangers, who alone at that time in the scarlet clad line, had green facings. From the angle of view the only identifying insignia is the collar badge and unfortunately that's partly obscured by his fixed bayonet (the usual practice when on sentry go). In the background some fellow soldiers of varying ranks can be seen in some cases wearing the glengarry cap that was undress headdress until 1894, when it was replaced by the field service cap. It suggests to me that the photo is no later than 1890 given the Martini Henry rifle with which the sentry is armed.

However, there is a very odd aspect to the uniforms seen in the photo. Some men are wearing a white faced tunic indicating that they are from an English or Welsh regiment without any Royal appellation, but others, ostensibly from the same unit, are wearing an undress frock where the only faced feature is the shoulder straps, that are white, leaving the collar and cuffs perhaps matching the body. I've not seen this in photographs before, but it is most clearly seen on the sentry himself. I can also make out that he has a longish curved shoulder title, which rules out the Welsh and implies an English county regiment. The collar badge looks as if it might be an unadorned Sphinx, which would suggest Manchester's, Dorset's, or perhaps Lincolns. See: [https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/ship-street-barracks-in-dublin-lawrence-photographic-studio/xwG31Wb6Xm1j6w?ms={\"x\"%3A0.15531569700709646%2C\"y\"%3A0.7103745943717222%2C\"z\"%3A11%2C\"size\"%3A{\"width\"%3A0.125%2C\"height\"%3A0.23209549071618038}}}](https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/ship-street-barracks-in-dublin-lawrence-photographic-studio/xwG31Wb6Xm1j6w?ms={\)

NB. Of the three regiments mentioned both Dorset's and Lincoln's had one of their two battalions based in various stations of Ireland in the early 1890s, but there's no mention of Dublin as their station. The 2nd Manchester's did not arrive until 1898, and it's unclear as to which station they occupied. Unfortunately I can find no definitive evidence as to which regiment wore a 7-button undress frock with white shoulder straps but self coloured collar and cuffs.

F:

It's a pity that the collar badge of the sentry is just sufficiently obscured to make identify difficult. The 7-button frock is intriguing as it's an unusual combination to have just the

shoulder straps faced. There were a number of patterns of undress frock, some with 5-buttons, some with 7 and some even with 6. These were garments that could be worn concurrently, as they were purely working jackets (on the home establishment) and not intended for ceremonial. Unlike the full dress tunics that were of standard design apart from the facing colour, each regiment might have their own idiosyncrasies with frocks, in terms of how facings were rendered. It might be possible by comparison with other contemporaneous photos (if they can be found) to determine which regiment it is. Back in the late 1970s and early 1980s there were a series of articles titled "The Cut of the Cloth" in the British, Military Modelling magazine by the Fosten brothers that examined these long forgotten Victorian uniforms in great detail. It emphasised the wide variety of garments there could be outside of the full dress so often favoured by artists (not least because more assuredly rendered).

F:

Richard Simkin was a prolific artist of military uniforms in the Victorian/Edwardian era. He was not forensically perfect, as he often painted after an event from notes and occasionally omitted key features, but the more important things he usually got correct.

In the early 1890s (so perfect for our photo) he painted a series for the popular Army & Navy Gazette showing typical uniforms of the British Army. Some were in the full dress that doesn't help us much, but quite a lot showed undress uniform in the field, which is exactly what we need. In examining the series it became apparent that the vast majority of regiments were wearing the 7-button frock with a facing colour collar and cuffs, which enabled them to be ruled out. *(Frocks had lower pockets with flaps, were made of a coarser woollen material with a looser cut and unlike tunics they did not have a line of white piping down the edge of the front join).*

I did, however, find at least three regiments wearing the unusual configuration that we seek, of just shoulder straps in the facing colour white with plain scarlet collar and cuffs matching the body of the frock. There might have been one or two others because as I've explained some of the regiments are shown only in full dress tunics but at least it does show us three regiments that might be the one seen in our subject photograph. Don't read too much into the white helmets as these reflect an experimental type that was briefly considered as a replacement for the blue helmet (standard since 1878) and issued to selected units as a trial.

We don't know exact dates for when they were provided and so can't use it to narrow things down, although it does make the regiment in the blue helmet perhaps a little more likely as that which we seek. If it is significant then it suggests our regiment might be the Suffolk's, but we'd need to see if they were in Ireland (Dublin) at the time and also their collar badge, a simple castle design, doesn't seem to match. The Devon Regiment's was a star and the West Yorkshire's the Prince of Wales's feathers.

The next stage then is to at least see if these regiments were in Dublin.

NB. Here is the link to the Simkin series of prints: <http://www.uniformology.com/BR-SIMKIN-02.html>

F:

I've scrutinised this (linked) register of regimental movements that was archived some years ago: <https://web.archive.org/web/20080112133950/http://www.regiments.org/regiments/uk/lists/bargxref.htm>

It's important to note that it does have some errors and occasionally missing pages, but in general it's very good. I've searched the three regiments above (i.e. their two regular battalions) and with the exception of 2nd Battalion Devon's, whose page is missing, we can rule them out, unless there is an error.

Attention needs to be shifted now to those white faced regiments that Simkin only showed in their full dress in his series of prints, as we don't know which pattern of frocks they wore, the faced collar and cuffs, or just a faced shoulder strap.

F:

Note the soldier's canvas haversacks hanging on hooks or nails set into the walls outside a window on the upper and lower storeys. This is because they had to be vigorously scrubbed to be kept clean and have then been left in the sun to dry. The haversack (onetime 'bread bag') was an interesting item of a soldier's personal equipment that went back several centuries with only tinkering changes to its design. Always used to carry the soldier's daily rations, it would have been instantly recognisable to soldiers at Bunker Hill and Waterloo.

Interestingly the term still survives today even though the item itself doesn't. British soldiers still collect their "haversack rations" from the cookhouse / main kitchen before a day's training outside of barracks.



I've made a little progress in identifying the regiment, but the frock is proving less helpful than I'd thought. I've managed to find my Cut of the Cloth series and found that it was the September 1983 edition that first attempted to examine the frock. It was pre Internet and they had relied on sketchy access to regimental museum photographic archives and, more importantly, the photos of enthusiastic collectors from all over the world, many of whom were writing in with descriptions and photos that had been seen by few.

The Cut of the Cloth series was so successful that the Fostens followed up with a beautiful

publication, The Thin Red Line, in which they consolidated much information, but not in the same minute detail as in the magazine series. The gist of matters from both sources is that the 7-button frocks with faced shoulder straps only, seem to have been the initial pattern adopted in the early 1890s, but by 1895 that type had been gradually replaced by the pattern with faced collar and cuffs, more similar in appearance to the full dress tunic (thus requiring careful scrutiny to separate them). Unfortunately this suggests that identifying the regiment purely by the type of frock will be chronologically flawed and so dubious as a means of proof.

There is another circumstantial clue that might assist us though, and that is the suggestion made alongside the version of the photo that I linked, in that a man named James Connolly serving with the King's Liverpool Regiment (1882-1889) had claimed some association with the image. Checking my list of units I find that the 1st Battalion of that regiment (a dark blue faced 'Royal' unit), was indeed based in Dublin between 1885-1891, which latter part fits with both, the rifle and the frock worn by the sentry. What would be sensible now is to see what other, white faced regiments, might have been stationed in Dublin over the same, latter period when the King's were there.

HP:

Westlake has:

1 West Yorks were in Ireland 1883-91

2 West Yorks were in Ireland 1876-78

1 Suffolks were in Ireland 1872-76

2 Suffolks were in Ireland 1882-88

F:

This confirms the West Yorks and Suffolks in the frame with regards to the frock worn by the sentry in the photo. I'm just looking at the annual stations returns and narrowing things down.

Interestingly 1st Battalion Glosters are in the frame for August 1889. The collar badge shape fits approximately, but I'm unsure about the frock yet (other images such as Simkin's shows them in the later pattern with white collar and cuffs by that date, but then there were two battalions plus the depot and the militia) and also there were several barracks in Dublin, so it depends if they were in Ship Street.

HP:

This link has a soldier from the Glosters living in Ship Street Barracks in 1892.

<https://www.rootschat.com/forum/index.php?topic=839023.0>

F:

That makes sense Dave as the Glosters were in Dublin between 1889 (arrival) and 1891 (departure for Malta).

F:

without a positive identity of insignia, or a unit sign, the uniform alone doesn't in this case give us sufficient clarity, so the best that I can do is narrow it down to a few options by way of elimination. In general the Dublin garrison of that time usually had five infantry battalions within its city limits. One seems to have been responsible for public duties, presumably for the castle, and the rest formed a 'square' (4-battalion strong) manoeuvre brigade.

Presumably some of these shared a barracks (probably two in each barracks), as I don't think Dublin had more substantial military accommodation than that.

Which regiment we see in the photo depends on whether you believe the date span to be **1885 to 1888**, or **1889 to 1891**. If the circumstantial evidence about James Connolly is correct then the earlier dates seem more likely and if you think the photo looks less old then the later period might be correct. The garrisons were as follows:

1885: **2nd Bn Border Regt (white facings)**, **1st DCLI (white facings)**, 1st Bn HLI (yellow facings), 2nd Bn KOSB (blue facings), 1st Bn NF (white facings).

1886: 1st Bn Queen's (blue facings), **1st Bn King's Liverpool (blue facings)**, **1st Bn West Yorks (white facings)**, **1st Bn Lincolns (white facings)**, 1st Bn Scots Guards (N/A).

1887: **1st Bn King's Liverpool (blue facings)**, **1st Bn West Yorks (white facings)**, **1st Bn Lincolns (white facings)**, 2nd Bn Black Watch (blue facings), 2nd Bn Grenadier Guards (N/A).

1888: No change = **1st Bn King's Liverpool (blue facings), 1st Bn West Yorks (white facings), 1st Bn Lincolns (white facings)**, 2nd Bn Black Watch (blue facings), 2nd Bn Grenadier Guards (N/A).

1889: 1st Bn Queen's, 1st Bn King's Own (blue facings), **1st Bn South Wales Borderers (white facings), 1st Bn Glosters (white facings)**, , 1st Bn Seaforth Hldrs (yellow facings).

1890: 1st Bn King's Own (blue facings), 1st Bn RSF (blue facings), **1st Bn Glosters (white facings)**, 2nd Bn KRRC (scarlet facings), 1st Bn Seaforth Hldrs (yellow facings).

1891: 1st Bn RSF (blue facings), **1st Bn Glosters (white facings)**, 2nd Bn KRRC (scarlet facings), 1st Bn Seaforth Hldrs (yellow facings), 1st Bn Grenadier Guards (N/A).

Looking at your photo the rifle is significant. The last Martini Henry's were manufactured in 1888 and these were all regular battalions that would quickly have received the new Lee Metford rifle, albeit not perhaps so quickly as the battalions overseas. Nevertheless, the presence of the older rifle in Dublin (a priority on the Home establishment for political reasons) does militate towards the earlier 1885-1888 period. However, as a foil to that is the frock, as these were not generally thought to be issued at Home until 1890, although no definitive order has so far ever been found, so it is still possible. The earliest 7-button frock to be issued does seem to have been the one with just the shoulder strap faced going by surviving contemporary photos, although precise dates are not always clear.

We then have to look at the shape of the collar badge that we can see and what appears to be a curved shoulder title, albeit very faint (can others see this?), which on white straps was in scarlet thread. The shape of the collar badge does appear to be similar to the shape of a Sphinx, which with a curved shoulder title favours the Lincolns and the Glosters, as the latter's more famous pattern with laurels at the base was not sealed until 1961. Both regiments badges were in white metal, which from the very pale shade apparent in the photo seems to match (see examples below). None of the other white faced regiments that were in Dublin over the span concerned had collar badges that fit the shape on the sentry, as mentioned earlier.

My conclusion then is that the regiment shown is either, the Lincolnshire Regt if the earlier period, or the Glosters if the later period. The circumstantial evidence connected with James Connolly of 1st Bn King's Liverpool favours the Lincolns, whereas the marriage mentioned by HERITAGE PLUS (Dave) favours the Glosters. I have not been able to find any direct evidence that either regiment wore the early pattern 7-button frock with white faced shoulder strap, but that does not mean that they may not have worn it, especially during the earlier of the two periods, and before it was replaced by the later type with white collar and cuffs from around 1895.

It's a matter now of weighing up the pros and cons and deciding upon which of these two options you prefer, Lincolns, or Glosters. A complete wild card would be the 1st Bn SWB, who were briefly in Dublin (seemingly as a stop gap) in 1889, but their photos are so well known and regularly seen that it's fairly well established that the regiment appears never to

have worn the 7-button frock with just white shoulder straps. Nevertheless, for the sake of completeness it should be mentioned that they wore a Sphinx collar badge too, thus making up a third option with white facings and Sphinx collar badge (full breasted and short mantled, as per the Lincoln's below).

NB. Regimental archives of the Lincoln's and the Glosters should make clear whether the Dublin barracks in which they were accommodated was that in Ship Street. We know the Glosters did from Dave's discovery mentioned above.



